

**THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA
ASHEVILLE DIVISION
CRIMINAL CASE NO. 1:17-cr-00062-MR-WCM-4**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

JAMES JEREMIAH TONEY,

Defendant.

)
)
)
)
)
)
)
)
)
)

ORDER

THIS MATTER is before the Court on the Defendant's letter, which the Court construes as a motion for compassionate release pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) [Doc. 122].

The Defendant seeks a reduction in his sentence pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. [Doc. 122].

Section 3582(c)(1)(A), as amended by The First Step Act of 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-391, 132 Stat. 5194, 5239 (Dec. 21, 2018), permits a defendant to seek a modification of his sentence for "extraordinary and compelling reasons," if the defendant has "fully exhausted all administrative rights to appeal a failure of the Bureau of Prisons to bring a motion on the defendant's behalf or the lapse of 30 days from the receipt of such a request by the warden of the defendant's facility, whichever is earlier." 18 U.S.C. §

3582(c)(1)(A). The Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit has made it explicitly clear that a district court has no authority to modify a sentence except in the narrow circumstances and procedures set forth in § 3582. See United States v. Goodwyn, 596 F.3d 233, 235 (4th Cir. 2010).

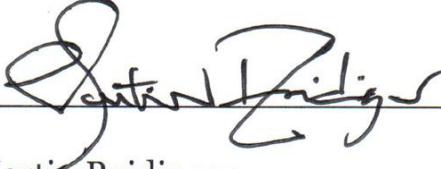
The Fourth Circuit has not yet ruled on whether the exhaustion requirements in § 3582(c)(1)(A) are jurisdictional or merely a claims-processing rule. This Court, however, need not decide that issue in order to resolve the present motion. Either way, the Defendant must exhaust his administrative remedies as defined in § 3582(c)(1)(A) before filing a motion for compassionate release in this Court. See Ross v. Blake, 136 S. Ct. 1850, 1857 (2016) (finding that “mandatory exhaustion statutes . . . establish mandatory exhaustion regimes, foreclosing judicial discretion”); United States v. Williams, No. CR JKB-15-0646, 2020 WL 1506222, at *1 (D. Md. Mar. 30, 2020) (denying motion for reduction of sentence because defendant failed to exhaust his administrative remedies, but declining to decide whether exhaustion requirement is jurisdictional). Here, the Defendant fails to assert in his motion that he has submitted a request for compassionate release to the warden of his Bureau of Prisons facility or that he has otherwise exhausted his administrative remedies. As such, the Court cannot grant the

requested relief. Accordingly, the Defendant's motion for a sentence reduction under 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) is denied without prejudice.

IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED that the Defendant's letter, which the Court construes as a motion for compassionate release pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3582(c)(1)(A) [Doc. 122], is **DENIED WITHOUT PREJUDICE** to refiling after the Defendant has fully exhausted all administrative rights to appeal a failure of the Bureau of Prisons to bring a motion on the Defendant's behalf or the lapse of 30 days from the receipt of such a request by the warden of the Defendant's facility, whichever is earlier.

Signed: July 14, 2020

IT IS SO ORDERED.



Martin Reidinger
Chief United States District Judge

